



SAMVIT

[Knowledge that leads to enlightenment]



Sri Sarada Math, Dakshineswar, Calcutta - 700 076

No, 17, March, 1988

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SAMVIT

स नो बुद्ध्या शुभया मयुनक्तु ।

May He endow us with good thoughts.

Shvetashvatara Upanishad III. 4.

Universal Prayers

एतावानस्य महिमा अतो ज्यायांश्च पुरुषः ।
पादोऽस्य विश्वा भूतानि त्रिपादस्यामृतं दिवि ॥

Such is His greatness; and still greater than this is the Supreme Being. All beings constitute one quarter of Him: three quarters of Him are immortal in heaven.

* * *

त्रिपादूर्ध्व उदैत्पुरुषः पादोऽस्येहाभवत्पुनः ।
ततो विष्वङ् व्यक्रामत् साशनानशने अभि ॥

With His three quarters the Supreme Being rose up: one quarter of Him, again, has come into being here. Thence He strode over the universe: over what enjoys and what enjoys not.

Rig Veda X. xc. 3, 4.

REFLECTIONS

The Angry World

THE WORLD is angry—the whole world of human beings. Children, youth, the middle-aged, the old—all vehemently proclaim their dissatisfaction with the world. They are angry. Why? Among all creation, the human species alone has the power of thought and discrimination, and the freedom to control passions; only man can regenerate 'man the brute' into 'man the God'. Then, why has so much horror been brought into the world? Why has such fierce hatred been engendered? Why has such bitter enmity been bred between person and person? Why is so much innocent blood shed? What is it all due to? We explain by calling it animality. Man, after all, is an animal. But if the animals were to understand and know about this, they would protest. For except when the stronger animals kill the weaker ones to satisfy their hunger, peace reigns in the jungle.

In the world of the angry, the modes and expressions of anger differ according to age. For example, a four-year old child may not want to go to school, but he has to go. Shrieking and shouting do not help him, so he meekly starts going to school, but every day quietly tears up the textbooks and notebooks given to him. What a violent mode of protest!

A young man's potential for sensitivity to the world around him is much enhanced; so his reactions are more destructive. For example, a boy in his late teens, the only son of a rich man, found after his father's death that the house and money and so on were left in his mother's name. He fought with his mother every day and made her life miserable. She explained to him that all would go to him in due course, but impatience and intolerance made him hostile. One day he ran after her with a knife to kill her; her, the mother who had given him birth and doted over him for years!

Some middle-aged persons are more dangerous. Children need attention and affection; youth want their demands to be fulfilled. But these middle-aged, with neither the hope of getting attention, nor getting their still-lurking desires fulfilled, simmer and feel frustrated. In utter disillusionment, they become cynics and spread dissatisfaction all around, or they

sometimes take their own lives leaving their families in the lurch.

Those old people who have had gruelling experiences during the other three stages of life, feel insecure and utterly estranged from the world. With all their physical and mental abilities weakening, they feel they are not welcome in their own families and society.

Why does human society which is based on humane ideals like compassion, friendship, love, and justice come to grief at every stage of life?

The Cause of Anger is Desire

The *Gita* categorically states: कामात् क्रोधोऽभिजायते (II. 62), 'From desire arises anger.' That is, when a desire is not fulfilled due to obstacles of various kinds, it leads to anger. But when a desire is fulfilled, it gives rise to another desire and thus it continues *ad infinitum*. There is no end to desire, as the *Manu Smriti* says:

न जातु काम कामानामुपभोगेन शाम्यति ।
हविषा कृष्णवर्त्मैव भूय एवाभिवर्धते ॥ (II. 94)

'Desire has no end, just as fire can never be extinguished by pouring oblations of ghee into it'.

The *Gita* makes an in-depth study of human psychology here, and asks, What gives rise to this all-consuming force called desire? It points out that the source of desire is absorption of the mind in the gross and subtle pleasures of the world. Due to the impact of sensual pleasures, the human mind loses the merit of being able to withdraw the senses from the objects of desire. Consequently, there is failure to attain that energy which is born of self-control. Swami Vivekananda tells us that we should learn to transcend the limitations of the senses. The pull of the senses gives rise to *dvandvas*, the pairs of opposites, such as joy and sorrow. Usually joy is welcome, sorrow is not. But to free oneself from the clutches of the *dvandvas*, one must accept the reality of both. Not to accept that reality, or to try to find means to allay the effects of both, brings about reactions which take the form of anger, dejection, and so forth. But once the reality is accepted, one enjoys

freedom from the senses, instead of indulging in freedom of the senses.

The Solution

Is there any sure way to come out of this vicious circle of desire and anger? There is a way; it is simple but sublime. The way is to turn the mind the other way about, not outwards but inwards. As Sri Ramakrishna says, मनेर मोड़ घुरिये दाओ, 'Turn the mind within.' Sooner or later, a point comes in our lives when we feel disgusted with our own selves, our own meaningless and empty lives. This *nirveda*, or state of experiencing complete disregard of worldly objects, becomes the first step towards spiritual progress. It makes a dent in the thick wall of ego and ignorance, and light then penetrates. At that stage we wish to fight our anger, our hostility, our weakness, and our estrangement from ourselves and the world. In this battle, the foes are within us; the moral force has no external insignia; victory is not declared by trumpet calls. It is a silent affair, peacefully solved. In the newly found wisdom we search for a basis of our being. This search for 'something' proves that 'something' does exist, call it by whatever name we may. Life cannot be without it. It is the sum total of life. The ancient Vedic Rishis told us that 'the world has a meaning and a plan as it is based on Brahman, the Supreme Being'. While we are estranged from this Supreme Being who is the source of joy and composure, we cry and feel miserable. Sri Sarada Devi's advice is, 'No one is a stranger, my child, learn to make the whole world your own.' The poet Rabindranath Tagore most fittingly sang:

हे पूर्ण तव चरणेरो काछे जाहा किछु सब आछे आछे आछे ।
नाई नाई भय, शे शुधु आमारई, निशिदिन काँदि ताई ॥

'O Supreme One, everything is at your feet only I cry night and day because I fear I have nothing.' Once this reunion with the Supreme comes, despair is dispelled and life becomes meaningful. We are then able to march on the path of सत्यं शिवं सुन्दरं 'Truth, Blessedness, and Beauty'. We become आत्मवान्, established in the Truth of our existence.

This is the only way in which the angry world can enter 'the mart of joy'.

Josephine MacLeod's Mission

PRAVRAJIKA PRABUDDHAPRANA

Samvit is featuring a series of articles in homage to the selfless dedicated women of the West who helped Swami Vivekananda with his work. In the previous issue, the series began with Sister Nivedita as a transmitter of Swamiji's message in India. This issue continues with Josephine MacLeod as the transmitter of Vivekananda's thought and literature in the West.

WHEN VIVEKANANDA first met Josephine MacLeod in New York she was an attractive, vivacious young woman, invariably dressed in the latest Paris fashion. She was five years older than Vivekananda. Outwardly she was fashionable and not at all domesticated and inwardly she had a mind that was ever ready to grasp the universal and the spiritual aspect of situations. 'Readiness is all,' she used to say. According to her 'itinerant credo', 'to stay in one place became a sign of limitation'. She was prepared mentally and materially to go anywhere anytime. In a money-bag which she hung around her neck, she carried a thousand dollars or more in rupees, sterling, lire and drachmas, enough cash to take her to Europe, India or America — 'You never know,' she would say. 'The world belongs to the Lord,' she wrote and to her, Vivekananda was the Lord. He was the centre of her world and she travelled around it many times as though she were circumambulating the deity of her worship. Inasmuch as she made the whole world her own she made it Vivekananda's. For that, she said, was her mission: 'to make lovers for Swamiji'. She reflected: 'Being an ordinary woman (and in *that* lies my strength) I know how little reading and writing have played in my life. But loving, doing, serving, and talking — are the natural ways of expression to me.' Joe, as Vivekananda affectionately called her, knew her own limitations but she had undaunted faith in Vivekananda's unlimitedness. She once wrote to her niece, Alberta, from Belur Math:

'The thing that held me in Swamiji was his *unlimitedness*. I never could touch the bottom—or top—or sides. The amazing size of him. . . . You ask if I am utterly secure in my grasp on the ultimate. Yes, utterly. It seems to be part and parcel of me.

Pravrajika Prabuddhaprana is a member of Sri Sarada Math, Dakshineswar.

It is the Truth I saw in Swamiji that has set me free; One's faults seem so insignificant, why remember them when one has the ocean of Truth to be our play-ground? It was to set me free that Swamiji came.'

In her playground, Joe was free to play her role as Vivekananda's apostle of love, his promoter in the élite cultured circles into which she easily entered through her inimitable style, her family-influence and her wealth. She brought to him the leading thinkers and writers of her world, the world of her time—which was quite a long time.

Joe transmitted Vivekananda's message to all who had the 'God-given power of the pen' and ears to hear. Vivekananda himself, perhaps, led her along this path. In his letter to her of 29 April 1898, he wrote that he had started the *Brahmavadin* in Madras and sent Mr. Goodwin to help with this magazine to be published in English. Now he wanted the Order to start a Bengali magazine in Calcutta. He wrote: 'I am going to start a paper in Calcutta. I will be ever so much obliged if you help me in starting that.' One day, Joe said to Vivekananda, 'Here is a little money you may be able to use.' He said: 'What? What?' She said, 'Yes'. 'How much?' he asked. And she said, 'Eight hundred dollars'. Instantly he turned to Swami Trigunatitananda and said, 'There, go and buy your press'. He bought the press and started *Udbodhan*, the Bengali magazine still being published by the Ramakrishna Mission.

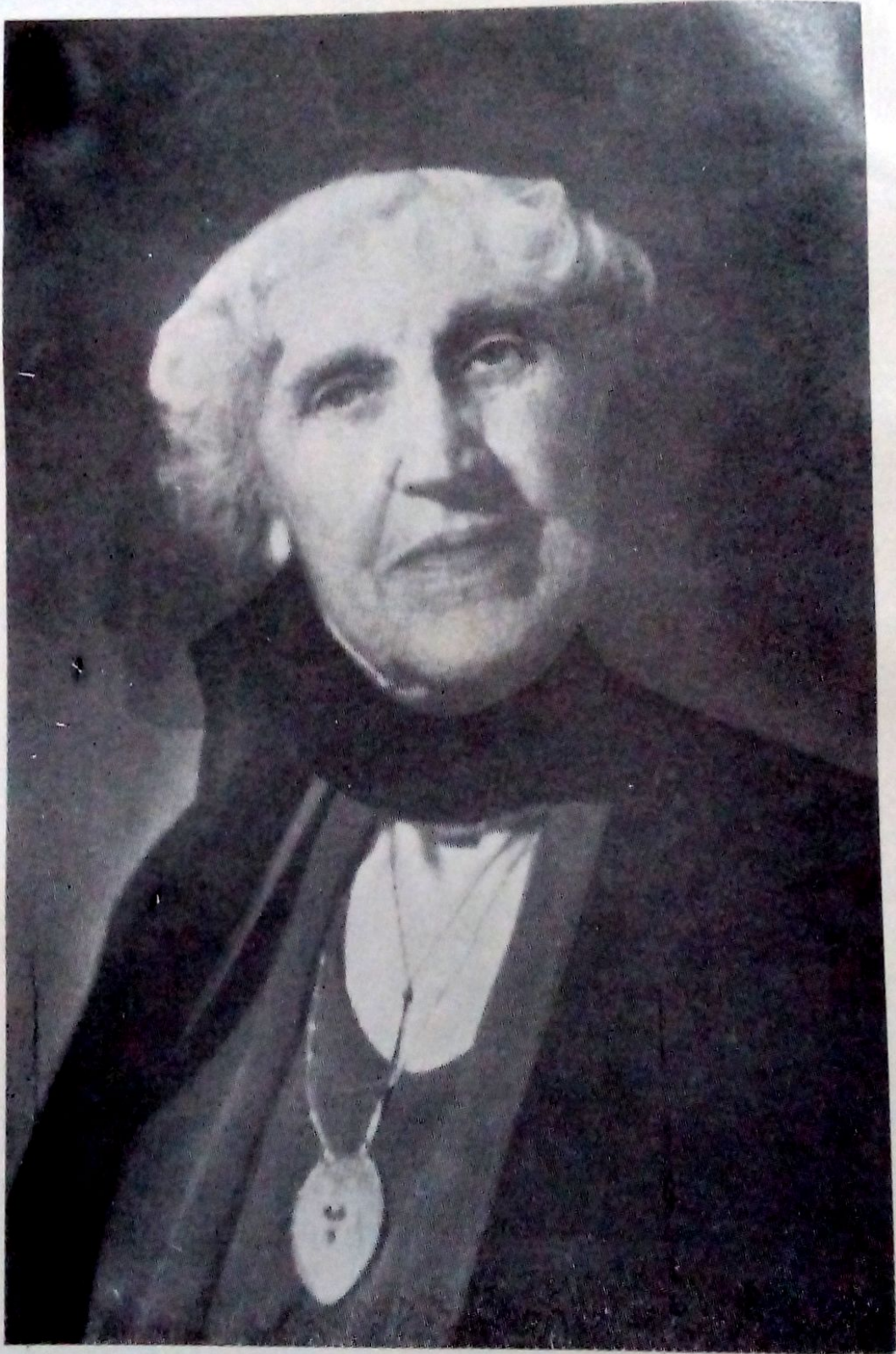
After Vivekananda left the world and left the work for his followers to carry on, Joe encouraged Sister Nivedita to write Vivekananda's biography. She had carefully saved all the reminiscences that Nivedita had written to her over the years in letters and now sent them for Nivedita's use. She gave her constant reassurance. When Nivedita started to collect and edit Vivekananda's letters for publication, Joe helped her to collect letters from many of his admirers in the West.

Swami Virajananda, after working on a biography of Swami Vivekananda for seven years, became discouraged; Joe wrote to him in 1913:

'You have so steadily kept your shoulders to the wheel of incessant work in Mayavati. I wonder if you went away for a good two-months' holiday, dear Swami, to get a new perspective



Josephine MacLeod in 1886 at twenty-eight



Josephine MacLeod in 1940 at eighty-two

of yourself and the work that you are doing—or if you would not be willing and ready to return to it with renewed vigour and enthusiasm. . . . I have had no other thought in my life and heart these eighteen years [since she met Vivekananda] than Swamiji and what he stood for.'

Joe herself made every effort to publish and circulate Vivekananda's teachings. In 1919, after sending his lectures on the Yogas to MacMillan, the publishers who at first rejected them, she wrote to Alberta from Ridgely Manor in New York:

' . . . Edgard Lee Masters has written to MacMillan, "I believe that the spiritual solution of the world depends upon the assimilation of these works." So without telling me the reason they have asked me to return Swamiji's book for further consideration:—which I have done today. But isn't life thrilling! And aren't we to play a big part?'

Joe had tried in vain to interest other Swamis in making a pocket-size edition of Vivekananda's works so she could present them to her well-to-do friends 'to carry around in their hand-bags'. Not until she approached Swami Nikhilananda in New York in 1933 was anything done. Swami Nikhilananda went ahead and published the Yoga lectures and *Inspired Talks* in small, attractive red-covered books which became very popular—though it caused distress to the Indian publishers. She made efforts to have Vivekananda's works translated into several languages. In 1941 she wrote to Alberta from New York regarding the translations into German:

' . . . Today airmail I've sent to Toni Sussman the written manuscript of *Inspired Talks* that I want her to read—oversee—and change anything she wishes to, have typed and sent where she sent her translation of *Jnana Yoga*. I've already paid Jean Herbert to have this printed in German, thus completing the four small [books] of Swamiji. I don't know how it was to be done, nor where, but I paid Jean Herbert the 1,000 dollars he asked, to be responsible and publish all these works of Swamiji in German. Toni has asked me what further work can she do for Swamiji? This I should like her to do as soon as possible. Mrs. Berliner has made this translation, but she thinks Toni's *Jnana Yoga* much finer, so go ahead, please.'

Joe encouraged the French writer, Jean Herbert to translate Swami Vivekananda's works, his biography and other books into French. Jean Herbert went to India with Joe in 1936. That year the Sorbonne University paid a special tribute to Swami Vivekananda. According to Jean Herbert's account, over two hundred people attended the meeting and Joe also spoke as her French was quite good. She gave a few reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda in America. It was also mentioned at the meeting that the French translation of Swami Vivekananda's *Yogas* and *Inspired Talks* would soon be published.

Once when Joe was travelling up the Nile with Emma Calvé, she met some English people who invited her to go to Japan with them. There she made the acquaintance of Okakura Kakuzo, one of the outstanding leaders in the revival of traditional Japanese art, saving it from Japan's westernization. Joe brought him to India to meet Vivekananda. She was delighted to have brought the two leaders of their countries' national movements together. She wrote:

'One of the happy moments of my life was when after a few days at Belur, Mr. Okakura said to me rather fiercely, "Vivekananda is ours. He is an Oriental. He is not yours." Then I knew that there was a real understanding between them. A day or two after, Swami said to me, "It seems as if a long lost brother has come." . . . And when Swamiji said to him, "Will you join us?" Mr. Okakura said, "No, I haven't finished with this world yet." '

In his books, *The Ideals of the East* and *The Awakening of Asia*, he tried to establish the unity of all Asian countries.

Joe's strong sense of mission can be seen in her letter from Los Angeles, written to her sister, Betty, on 15 June 1914:

'I have certainly found here in Mr. Mukherji [the author Dhan Gopal Mukherji] a new expression of India. Brilliant, strong mind, somehow my responsibility to India is suddenly lifted to his shoulders. It's rather curious. As if I had carried Swamiji's burdens (or shall we call it His gift) of India's place in the world of spiritual learning in my heart, till this boy of twenty-three comes along, and now it is for Mr. Mukherji to carry out and not I. It's most interesting to watch, how the

sense of responsibility has left me: . . . Our great role is yet to be played. How? Where? I don't know nor really care—but we've not lived with and loved Swamiji for nothing. It's bound to work out gloriously; but even if it didn't, knowing Him was worth this and other worlds!' Two days later she wrote: 'I've poured out all my heart of all the wealth that Swamiji poured into me—on him [Dhan Gopal Mukherji]—and now my work is done and I feel a curious lightness.'

The result of Joe's outpouring was Dhan Gopal's book about Sri Ramakrishna, *The Face of Silence*. Published in 1926, it was one of the first books published in English on Sri Ramakrishna's life. Mr. Mukherji acknowledges his debt to Miss MacLeod by dedicating the book to her. When the book came out, she wrote to her niece: ' . . . And so you both like much Dhan Gopal's *Face of Silence* I do hope you've written direct to him about it. He does so want our family approval, for of course we are as near to Swamiji as anyone alive.' *The Face of Silence* was chosen by the League of Nations as one of the forty outstanding books of 1926 for the International Library of Geneva.

After reading *The Face of Silence* and meeting Joe, Romain Rolland, the Nobel Prize-winning French author, became interested in Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. His books, *La Vie de Ramakrishna* and *La Vie de Vivekananda*, published in 1927, were the outcome of Joe's frequent visits to his home in Villeneuve in Switzerland in 1927. He encouraged her to tell him everything she knew about Vivekananda. These conversations, and those Romain Rolland had with her friends to whom she introduced him, were recorded in his diary which was published in French in 1960 and in Bengali in 1987. His works, including the biographies of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda were also translated into Russian by 1936. Two letters of Swami Shivananda to Miss MacLeod in 1927 tell of Romain Rolland's further enquiries to the Belur Math and of his gratitude to Josephine MacLeod. Joe brought Romain Rolland Vivekananda's books; Rolland wrote in his *Journal*, 'My sister has devoured them and every night she reads them to me.'

The late Mircea Eliade, the foremost scholar today of the history of religion, Indology and esoteric religion, wrote in his diary in July, 1961:

'I've learned this purely and simply extra-ordinary thing: R.R. didn't know English at all; his sister would read and translate Vivekananda's books for him, the critical studies and biographies on Ramakrishna, Gandhi's texts and letters, etc. And it was in this total ignorance—of the country, the history, the languages of India, and even of English—that Rolland wrote the four volumes on Gandhi, Ramakrishna, and Vivekananda. . . . [Romain Rolland's] memories of Miss Josephine MacLeod, Vivekananda's friend and admirer, are just as fascinating. I myself met her during the winter of 1929, at Belur Math. She had written inviting me to go and see her. How happy I was when I discovered that she spoke French. I spent a whole afternoon on her terrace looking at the Ganges. . . . It was through Miss MacLeod that I was later to receive Vivekananda's books.'

Romain Rolland also records his conversations with Mrs. von Keller, whom Josephine MacLeod had introduced to the Ramakrishna Mission. Joe met Mrs. von Keller, a Swiss schoolteacher, in Zurich in 1929. Joe was there to pay the publishers of the first German editions of Swami Vivekananda's *Yogas*. She invited Mrs. von Keller to India to give some lectures on education and asked her to get various translations of Vivekananda's works published in German. On 20 March, 1930 she wrote to Alberta, 'Mrs. von Keller. . . is sailing to Naples. In her hands are now put all the German translations of Swamiji's works, demands for which are coming in from Germany.' On 30 October, 1940 Joe wrote to Alberta regarding the manuscript of the German translation of *Inspired Talks*:

'I sent the first one-third three weeks ago by Clipper to Mrs. von Keller. . . . Mrs. Berliner has spent hundreds of hours on it and they both come tomorrow with another third. . . it is such things that make me feel why I am still living and learning so well. When I joined the Town Hall Club last Monday, they asked my occupation and I wrote, "To learn". . . .'

In 1938, when Joe was eighty, she was in Greece, where she met the writer, Nikos Kazantzakis. She had met Nikos' wife, Helen, in Athens. Joe told her, 'I don't care in the least for

stone monuments. I have no desire to see the Acropolis or any other ancient treasure. I love to see *people!*' Joe told Helen that she was anxious to meet Nikos and Helen took her to their house in Aegina. While Joe was their guest, she gave Nikos 1,500 dollars to publish one of the books which made him one of the most important writers of the twentieth century.

Joe had inherited a house at Stratford-on-Avon in England which had belonged to Shakespeare's daughter. Nikos later went to live there for a year and there he wrote his diary, *England*. In it he noted what he had learnt from Joe about Vivekananda and the monastery at Belur on the bank of the Ganga. Joe had told him how she lived in a house by the side of Vivekananda's temple there, spending her time in meditation. Nikos learnt that after her meditation, if she ever made a strong resolution to do something she thought needed to be done, she would suddenly spend money exorbitantly. But in her daily life, in matters of money she was frugal and never spent her money on useless things. (In fact, while in the Belur Math, she never turned on the light in her room at night but used an oil lamp instead.) Once she said to someone in New York: 'Do you know why I take buses and not taxis? It is because I want to be able to give something to others.'

Nikos wrote in *England* about Joe:

'The woman was more than eighty years old. I have never seen such a beautiful, well-shaped, slim and soft woman. She had brilliantly shining blue eyes, a strong jaw and a smile full of reflection. I have never seen such radiance or vivacity. I have never seen such an insatiable hunger for seeing and hearing. And I have never seen a person who had gained such a victory over time. This woman travelled alone from India to Europe, and from Europe to America with impatient speed: her fear was that perhaps her eyes would close before long and there would not be sufficient time for her to see and know everything. I was amazed by her grasping-power and her constant insatiable thirst for knowledge—her mind, hungry as a child's. "Learning is my religion," she told me with a laugh.'

'I learn all I know from people,' Joe once said. After telling Nikos many things about Vivekananda, and what he had taught her, she took out and unfolded a yellowed letter that she

always carried—it was Vivekananda's most beautiful letter to her which he had written from Alameda in April 1900. 'When Joe had read this heart-breaking farewell letter,' wrote Nikos, she asked him, 'Do you ever pray? Do you pray when you are very happy or deeply depressed?' 'No. I never pray,' replied Nikos. 'What do you do then?' 'I write,' said Nikos. 'That way I find relief.' 'I never pray,' said Joe. 'When I feel overburdened, I go out for a walk—not to the town, to the city. And I study the faces of people in the street. Or else I do what I consider to be a good deed. Or I read this letter. That is how I get rid of anguish.'

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What reason blinds Him? He, the playful one is playing. these tears and laughs over all parts of the play! Great fun, great fun, as Joe says.

It is a funny world, and the funniest chap you ever saw is He, the Beloved! Infinite fun, is it not? Brotherhood or playmatehood—a school of romping children let out to play in this play-ground of the world!

Swami Vivekananda

One Loincloth

SHIV DHAWAN

On the outskirts of a village was a cottage humble and small,
in which a sadhu sat in meditation deep, awaiting the Divine Call.
After morning ablutions, he went to beg alms from the village
daily,
before departing, he would hang his wet *kaupin* to dry on a tree.

In his absence vicious rats would tear the *kaupin* to shreds
leaving the hapless sadhu wringing his hands. and scratching
his head.
He must eventually destroy the pests, the sadhu emphatically
declared—but,
only after saving the loincloth by spreading it on the roof of his
hut.

The rats, not being fooled, waited till he was well on his way,
and gleefully cut large holes in the *kaupin* on the roof that day.
In the evening the sadhu ruefully accepted the view that,
if rats are to be done away with, he must now keep a cat.

Seeing the cat perform well, 'I am safe' the sadhu said,
without realizing that another problem was going to raise its
head.

From where was the sadhu to obtain milk for his cat and how?
Some helpful villagers suggested he could satisfy his pet by
purchasing a cow.

True, the milch cow satisfied both the cat's and his own
creature needs,
but he had to beg for straw on which the cow could feed.
The villagers once again suggested that agricultural land he
should obtain,
so that he would never have to beg for cloth, milk and grain.

Adapted from *Tales and Parables of Sri Ramakrishna*.

Shiv Dhawan is a Senior Research Executive in the Foundation for Organisational Research, New Delhi.

The sadhu full of joy set out to purchase some cultivable land,
and to till it, gradually engaged many labourers as farmhands.
Constructing barns and a large house to live in, changed his life,
why, in order to look after this vast estate, he even acquired a wife.

One day, his guru, passing that way, to his utter amazement,
found,
the disciple sitting miserable and dejected with chattel and
children rushing around.
Seeing his preceptor, the man bowed low, shedding tears of
shame,
'What has happened to you, my dear boy?' the anxious guru
exclaimed,
Eyes downcast, the sadhu cried, 'Protection from the rats I
sought,
all this happened because I wanted to save a loincloth'.

To Ramakrishna

on his way to Calcutta from Dakshineswar

RAMESHWARI KHANNA

In this dark night
By the lone roadside,
Lord, we await your passing by.
Ramakrishna, shower on us your grace.
Turn on your own face your lantern's light;
Then shall we see that sight sublime
For which sages strive life after life,
We who stand by the dark roadside.

The 'Kalasha' of the Bhagavata Cult: Saint Tukaram

BINDUMATI GHATE

SAYINGS OF Tukaram are very popular among the people of Maharashtra. They are often quoted to depict everyday situations. Tukaram is known to be the last saint of the Bhagavata cult, to which he attracted innumerable followers by his *kirtans* and *abhangas**. Hence he is called the 'Kalasha'† of the Bhagavata cult. The Bhagavata cult is a religion based on devotion to Vitthala (Krishna), who is the presiding deity of Pandharpur in Maharashtra. The ideal of the cult is to spread scriptural knowledge to one and all and to cultivate the feeling of equality among all people. Even to this day the followers of the Bhagavata cult unanimously agree that Tukaram made this ideal a reality.

The loving hearts of the saints of Maharashtra were moved to see the inhuman, harsh treatment of the so-called lower castes, who were called untouchables, by the upper classes. Saint Jnaneshwar, the founder of the Bhagavata cult, wanted to break the rigid bonds of society and do away with the artificial barriers of caste and creed. His task was next to impossible because this system had been in existence for many years. Undue advantage was taken by the proud upper classes; they would never allow anybody to interfere in what they thought to be solely their prerogatives. The Brahmins especially, were dead set against the preachings of the Bhagavata cult which primarily laid down the ideals of oneness and godliness of all human beings, and the essential unity of all beings in the world created by God. This was a challenge to the supreme authority of the Brahmins for they strongly held down other castes and enjoyed their privileged status for generations.

**Kirtan* is singing the glories of God usually in concert; *abhangas* is a composition in which the metre follows no limit of a particular number of letters or syllabic feet. It has a rule of rhyme and does not exceed six to eight lines.

†A rounded pitcher-shaped pinnacle at the top of a temple.

They vehemently opposed Saint Jnaneshwar and others who tried to take up the cause of the downtrodden castes. One more point for which the upper classes censured the Bhagavata cult followers was that the latter wrote all their literature in the colloquial Marathi language. The Brahmins had so far successfully managed to keep this knowledge to themselves as all the religious literature was retained in Sanskrit and no one except Brahmins had a right to learn it. When, however, Jnaneshwar boldly came forward to expound the *Gita* in Marathi and thus open the door of knowledge to all castes and creeds, the Brahmins were furious. It was like adding fuel to the fire when saints like Namadeva, Chokhoba, Sawata Mali and Tukaram, themselves from lower castes, freely preached philosophy and religion in their simple mother-tongue. It was a great threat to their deep-rooted prejudice that only Brahmins had a right even to touch religious books.

Tukaram was inspired by Jnaneshwar to take a vow to spread the Bhagavata cult. His private and religious life was strewn with all sorts of obstructions, opposition and criticism, but he was firm as a rock. Generally we do not have reliable sources from which to form a clear picture of a saint's life. It is often shrouded by vague references, mystical events, and exaggerated descriptions. However, we get detailed information about Tukaram's personal life and teachings from what his disciples, critics turned followers and even his own autobiographical *abhangas* reveal to us. These bits of information, coming from varied sources, confirm and clarify the details of some phases of his life, though they are not enough to depict the whole span of it.

Tukaram's ancestors had a long standing in the village of Dehu near Pune. They all ran grocery shops in that village to maintain their families. But the main fact was that they were sincere devotees of Panduranga or Vitthala of Pandharpur. They passed their leisure time reading religious books like the *Bhagavata*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, Puranas and so on. All of them tried to lead religious lives, respect elders and guests and always did *japa* of Vitthala's name. Thus religion and devotion to God was in Tukaram's blood.

Tukaram was born in Shaka 1520 (1598 AD), the middle son of Bolhoba and Kanakai. His elder brother was Savaji and the younger, Kanhaya. The family was prosperous during

the lifetime of Tukaram's parents. His father did well at the grocery shop which he ran and shouldered the responsibility of the village *Panchayat* to the utmost of his ability. He specially welcomed Vitthala's devotees, called Varkaris to his house and treated them well. He devotedly listened to their songs about Vitthala. He was respected by all. His devotion had a deep effect on the minds of his sons, especially the eldest, Savaji, who was from childhood indifferent to domestic life. Savaji and Tukaram were happy to hear from the Varkaris the mythological stories and sayings of Bhagavata-saints.

Sometimes Bolhoba would teach the children of the family and make them study alphabets, do sums or work at the grocery shop. Tukaram was sharp and clever at business but not his elder brother, Savaji. The latter wanted to abandon everything and to wander here and there in search of God and did so after the death of his wife. Tukaram was married at a very early age as was the common practice those days. His wife suffered from asthma and could not carry the heavy responsibility of Tukaram's domestic life. After persistent persuasion by his parents, he married for the second time. His second wife was Awali, the daughter of an established merchant in Pune. Awali was a devoted and loving life-long partner to Tukaram, sharing equally his joys and sorrows, calamities and adversities as a good wife should do. Awali, although an uneducated housewife, recognized the greatness of her husband, although she blamed him for his lack of common sense and for the negligence of his domestic duties. She held Vitthala responsible for the havoc in her life. However, she had a very soft corner in her heart for Tukaram and took good care of him. She was able to make both ends meet and catered to the needs of all the members of the family, so Tukaram could calmly tread his metaphysical path and devote himself solely to his life-mission of spreading the Bhagavata cult.

In his youth, Tukaram often performed *kirtan* in which he expounded the basic principles of life: truth, moral behaviour, devotion to God and love of fellow beings. It is very interesting to note that even in the beginning of his creative life the themes of his *kirtans*, which we find prominent also in his later *abhangas* were straightforward criticism of vices, disgust for hypocrisy and cheating, and censure of ostentation. He wrote in the

style of the *abhangas* and *ovees** of his predecessors such as the saints Jnaneshwar, Namadeva and Ekanatha. At first, his own compositions were few as he had not developed confidence due to lack of spiritual realization. He was groping in the dark to find out the underlying principles of the universe, the exact meaning of the Paramatma and the connection between the spiritual and the worldly life. His spirit and power of expression, even at an early age was vehement and impressive. His father, Bolhoba, whenever he heard Tukaram's *kirtan*, was sure that his son was going on the right path and would one day emerge as a Vaishnava guide, leading many in the Bhagavata cult. His prediction was right, as we see in Tukaram's later life.

The saying, 'difficulties never come singly' proved true in Tukaram's life. His parents passed away, one after the other. It was such a shock to him that he could not console himself and began to blame Vitthala for his sorrow. 'What pleasure do you find, O Vitthala, in seeing us miserable?' This mood, however, soon changed as he was not an ordinary person. His mind took a turn and he began to examine his thoughts. Then he said to himself, 'Who am I to blame God? Have I ever fully dedicated my heart to Him? Is my mind not always involved in worldly things? Have I lived according to my philosophy?' Then, to add to his personal loss, the wife of his elder brother died and his brother left home never to return. Tukaram's first wife was always sick and now she too breathed her last. At the same time, a devastating famine spread in Maharashtra. Dehu was a small village and there were no resources to help the starving people. Tukaram tried to help them with whatever he had in his shop. His ardent desire to see God in everything urged him to do this, even at the cost of his own financial loss and inconvenience to his family. The cumulative result of all these miseries and his philanthropic activities led him to bankruptcy. It was not because he neglected his business as is wrongly believed.

Tukaram nevertheless wholeheartedly plunged into

**Ovi* is one of the old forms of Marathi poetry, popular in all strata of society. It has four lines, three of which are of equal length and the last one is a short line. Alliteration at the end of the first three lines is another peculiarity of an *ovi*. Folk-songs were composed in *ovis* and learned saints like Jnaneshwar adopted this form while commenting on the *Gita*.

devotional life and nothing could divert him from his path. He developed originality and composed *abhangas* one after another. By expressing his thoughts in Marathi, he glorified his mother-tongue and the people remember him for his contribution to the development of the Marathi language. Even these days, uneducated farmers and workers sing his *abhangas* and find relief from their worries and grievances. The variety of subjects and his simple style in dealing with them is wonderful. He never uses flowery language. If one could read the original compositions, one would be able to enjoy them better. Every point is clarified in such familiar terms that we are reminded of Sri Ramakrishna's way of explaining and illustrating spiritual truths. He could be understood even by a simpleton. That shows how all saints at all times and places think alike.

Tukaram read religious books and tried to find that Truth which is the highest Self. He had no schooling or teacher or any other means of attaining knowledge. Still when one goes through the treasures of valuable thoughts in his *abhangas*, one cannot help feeling impressed. For example, he said that to do a good deed to others is real virtue and to harm others is sin; if a person is not pure at heart, how can the Ganga or any other holy water purify him? Money should be obtained only through just and proper means. Day and night we are fighting a war between the outer world and our minds. He is really a saint who tries to relieve the sorrows of the depressed and the downtrodden. Many sayings like these can be quoted from his innumerable *abhangas*. They have served as guidelines to many people for the last three centuries. He always emphasized in his *kirtans* and *abhangas* the cultivation and development of a pure mind, a healthy social attitude and a righteous character. His was a sort of revolutionary thought as it brought all castes on a common platform. It was a challenge to the position of privilege and authority of the higher castes. Naturally they opposed him with all their might, and theirs being the ultimate authority, they ordered Tukaram to throw all his written *abhangas* in the Indrayani river near Dehu. Tukaram respected the Brahmins and did as they asked. But his heart was so much stricken with grief at the separation from his literature that he observed a complete fast for thirteen days, spending that time only in praying to God and doing *japa*. He said, 'These are not my words; they came from God. If He wishes, let Him save them.'

On the fourteenth morning, all the papers were seen intact, floating on the surface of the river! Tukaram did not take this as a miracle. He thought God's prestige was at stake, that is why He saved the *abhangas*. Though a devotee of a high order, he never tried to impress people with any kind of mysticism or miracles. His words and his sincerity attracted followers in great numbers but he was so humble that he never claimed to be anybody's guru.

Shivaji, the Maratha emperor, expressed his wish to leave the world and become a disciple of Tukaram. But Tukaram was fully aware of everybody's duty (dharma) and he advised Shivaji to carry out his mission as a king. Tukaram set an example of how a devotee should be detached and free from all desires. He sent back the valuable presents which he had received from Shivaji, saying that they could be better used for the purpose of serving his subjects. Many incidents in Tukaram's life exemplify the excellent characteristics of a saint.

Nature was Tukaram's great friend; daily he went to Bhandara, the mountain near Dehu. There he sat in the thought of Vitthala for hours together. It is interesting to note that though he was a staunch devotee of Vitthala, he never went to Pandharpur. On the contrary, Vitthala Himself often went to see him and sometimes helped him. Tukaram sincerely believed that God is within oneself. He said, 'Our body is Pandharpur and the Atma is Vitthala.'

As his life was full of wonderful turns and turmoils, so was his end. On the second day of the month of Phalgun in Shaka 1571 ('650 AD), Tukaram, it is said, vanished in a bright light while performing *kirtan*, and became one with God. He said, 'God has come in person to take me with Him'. Many learned people have explained, in different ways, Tukaram's becoming invisible at the end of his life. Some say that the Brahmins who could not stand his popularity secretly did away with his body and spread a rumour that he went to heaven in his body. Others say that Tukaram, as his end was nearing, said that Vitthala was calling him and he wanted to go with Him. He many times thought that Vitthala was standing on the other bank of the river Indrayani. They say that on that particular day, in his ecstasy and desire to be one with Vitthala, he must have tried to cross the river and drowned. After two days the

villagers found his *tal** and *chappals*† on the bank of the river.

Whatever may be the truth, one thing goes without saying, that Tukaram is rightly called the 'Kalasha' of the Bhagavata cult. He has crowned the temple of the Bhagavata cult, the devotees of which, to this day, find solace in his *abhangas*. Every year there is a pilgrimage to Pandharpur. In the months of Ashada (July) and Kartika (November) large numbers of devotees from Alandi and Dehu proceed to Pandharpur. The procession is led by *dindis*, or carts, carrying the pictures of saints like Jnaneshwar and Tukaram. The devotees chant as they go, and their slogan is 'Jnanoba—Tukaram', a compound word denoting two saints, first and last, of the Bhagavata cult and suggesting in between the names of the other Bhagavata cult followers.

The Place of Prayer in Controlling the Mind

PRAVRAJIKA VEDANTAPRANA

THE MAIN struggle in spiritual life is to control one's mind and to direct its tremendous force towards God—the ultimate Reality in this shadowy world. The human mind is subject to weakness. Unless this instrument becomes strong, subtle, and pure, weakness creeps in. Thus spiritual life is based on strength. The Upanishad says: 'The Atman cannot be realized by the weak.' So, deep reflection on the eternal nature of the Atman is considered by the Upanishads to be an inseparable part of spiritual life. The Atman is the powerhouse of infinite strength. A discriminating and concentrated mind is the finest instrument with which to penetrate the secret of human nature. In comparison with this, the theoretical understanding of what is right and what is wrong in the moral world is not so difficult. The main difficulty lies in one's constant failure to withdraw and to direct one's energy in the proper channel which the Shashtra prescribes as the path that leads to the ultimate good (श्रेयमार्ग).

*a kind of wooden percussion instrument used to keep rhythm.

†sandals.

To tackle the mind, which is often compared to a mad elephant, and to bring it under control, constitutes the primary training in spiritual life. Almost all the religious scriptures of India stress the importance of control of the mind. The mind should be studied, observed and trained. Its power is unlimited. If the mind is trained, purified and concentrated, nothing is impossible for it to achieve in this world and hereafter.

Like a magician, the mind has created a network of innumerable knots which has covered our real nature. Again, like a magician, the mind itself can easily undo the knots in a second as it serves as a subtle instrument to reflect on the *Satchidananda*, the indweller in the human heart. As the *Vivekachudamani* says:

'Clouds are brought in by the wind and again driven away by the same agency. Similarly, man's bondage is caused by the mind, and liberation, too, is caused by that alone.'*

The path of knowledge prescribes mainly the development of the power of discrimination between the real and the unreal and making this discrimination a perpetual habit. The Yoga philosophy, on the other hand says that unless you withdraw the mind from worldly objects you cannot concentrate. First, you should close the two doors of past and future thoughts; then, thinking on the present, go on controlling your *prana*, i.e. practise breath-control, and gradually the mind will come under your grip. That trained mind will attain *samadhi* easily. But on this path the help of a guru is necessary at every step.

Now we come to Bhakti Yoga. Repeating the holy name and praying form the most important part of this path. The yearning of the human soul to surrender to an omnipresent Deity is found from time immemorial. To a beginner in spiritual life, God is an abstract idea. To develop a loving attitude towards Him is indeed difficult. The question is how to collect our thoughts and imagination and centre them on this divine Reality. What is the way? The Bhakti-Shastra prescribes a very simple and effective method by which a threefold

* वायुनाऽनीयते मेघः पुनस्तेनैव नीयते ।

मनसा कल्प्यते बन्धो मोक्षस्तेनैव कल्प्यते ॥ 172.

purpose is served:

- 1) Concentration and withdrawal of the mind;
- 2) Spiritual food;
- 3) Strength.

In Bhakti Yoga, one attains concentration of mind through love of God. As He is beyond our senses, mind, and intellect, how are we to develop love towards Him? We have experienced worldly love. We see a person, know him well, and then mutual love and sympathy develop. The method for developing love for God is prayer. Swami Vivekananda said, 'Let us pray day and night incessantly'. Gradually, through constant prayer, an intimate relationship is established between God and the devotee. Instead of seeking help from the world, the devotee is drawn inward and begins to depend on God at every step. However, intense concentration is not possible in the beginning. Sometimes, even though we may be quiet outwardly, we continuously talk with others in our minds, playing the double role of subject and object together. To silence this activity of the mind, we can divert it, either by repetition of the holy name or by prayer, to thoughts of the Supreme.

Prayer is the easiest method or means. It helps a lot, not only in the beginning but throughout our whole spiritual career. From the very outset, when our faith has not yet turned into firm conviction, let us pray to the Lord. We may not seem to get immediate answers to our appeals, but the remarkable effect of prayer is that it soon changes the nature of the mind. As we go on praying and repeating the holy name of God, the mind is connected to the higher Reality and, through love of our ideal, it gradually becomes one-pointed and concentrated.

Ordinarily we feed our minds with worldly thoughts and images and reap the poisonous effect afterwards. It is better to feed the mind with a new understanding through prayer and form a habit of relating ourselves to God, the Lord, the activating consciousness within and without. Prayer is not only the direct line to God but itself serves as spiritual food for the aspirant. The mind gets proper nourishment as well as medicine to recover from world-fever. It serves as a soothing balm to the bleeding and burning heart, preparing us for ultimate surrender to God. Step by step, our dryness is removed, a hunger of our soul is created through the marvellous power of prayer and one ultimately grows in spirituality.

Strength is roused by faith in ourselves and faith in God. We draw strength of mind when we recall Swamiji's saying that though we may be but a single ripple in the ocean when we consider ourselves as individuals, when we connect ourselves with the boundless ocean we are no longer helpless. We know that the ocean stands behind us and we are part and parcel of that infinite power and strength. Prayer connects the devotee with that infinite powerhouse and then he moves strong and fearless in this world.

Sri Ramakrishna, in this age of scepticism, firmly emphasizes prayer and gives us assurance that God always listens to our prayers. We vainly try to sense Him in this gross world; let us pray to God directly to remove our incapacity and make us capable of having a glimpse of the spiritual region. Continuous prayer, when done with great earnestness of mind, brings light to our souls.

Swamiji's Small Treasures

IN AMERICA, Swami Vivekananda delivered lectures on the powers of the mind and Jnana Yoga, illustrating them with many interesting stories. These incidents and stories of magic are among his treasures.

I once heard of a man who, if anyone went to him with questions in his mind, would answer them immediately; and I was also informed that he foretold events. I was curious, and went to see him with a few friends. We each had something in our minds to ask, and to avoid mistakes, we wrote down our questions and put them in our pockets. As soon as the man saw one of us, he repeated our questions, and gave the answers to them. Then he wrote something on paper, which he folded up, asked me to sign on the back, and said, 'Don't look at it; put it in your pocket and keep it there till I ask for it again.' And so on to each one of us. He next told us about some events that would happen to us in the future. Then he said: 'Now, think of a word or a sentence from any language you like.' I thought of a long sentence from Sanskrit, a language of which he was entirely ignorant. 'Now, take out the paper from your pocket,' he said. The Sanskrit sentence was written

there! He had written it an hour before with the remark, 'In confirmation of what I have written, this man will think of this sentence.' It was correct. Another of us who had been given a similar paper which he had signed and placed in his pocket, was also asked to think of a sentence. He thought of a sentence in Arabic which it was still less possible for the man to know; it was some passage from the *Koran*. And my friend found this written down on the paper.

Another of us was a physician. He thought of a sentence from a German medical book. It was written on his paper.

Several days later I went to this man again, thinking possibly I had been deluded somehow before. I took other friends and on this occasion also he came out wonderfully triumphant.

Another time I was in the city of Hyderabad in India, and I was told of a Brahmin there, who could produce numbers of things from where, nobody knew. This man was in business there; he was a respectable gentleman. And I asked him to show me his tricks. It so happened that this man had a fever, and in India there is a general belief that if a holy man puts his hand on a sick man he would be well. This Brahmin came to me and said, 'Sir, put your hand on my head so that my fever may be cured.' I said, 'Very good; but you show me your tricks.' He promised. I put my hand on his head as desired, and later he came to fulfil his promise. He had only a strip of cloth about his loins, we took off everything else from him. I had a blanket which I gave him to wrap round himself, because it was cold, and made him sit in a corner. Twenty-five pairs of eyes were looking at him. And he said, 'Now, look, write down anything you want.' We all wrote down names of fruits that never grew in that country, bunches of grapes, oranges and so on. And we gave him those bits of paper. And there came from under his blanket, bushels of grapes, oranges, and so forth, so much that if all that fruit was weighed it would have been twice as heavy as the man. He asked us to eat the fruit. Some of us objected, thinking it was hypnotism—but the man himself began eating—so we all ate. It was all right.

He ended by producing a mass of roses. Each flower was perfect, with dew-drops on the petals, not one crushed, not one injured. And masses of them! When I asked the man for an

explanation, he said, 'It is all sleight of hand.'

. . . It is not a freak of nature that a man is born with such powers. They can be systematically studied, practised and acquired.

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You have heard those wonderful stories of India, of how those magicians can make a man see a rope rise from the ground to the skies. I have not seen one of them. One of the Mogul Emperors, Jehangir, mentions it, and he was a great sage. He says, 'Allah, what do these devils do? They take a rope or a chain, and the chain is thrown up and up, until it becomes firm, as if it were stuck to something. Then he lets a cat go up the chain, then a dog, then a wolf, then a tiger, then a lion. All walked up the chain, and vanished. Sometimes they will send men up the chain. Two men will go up and begin to fight, and then both of them vanish and after a while you hear a noise of fighting, and a head, a hand, and a foot fall, and, mind you, there are two or three thousand people present. The fellow showing it has only a loincloth on.' They say this is hypnotism, throwing a net over the audience. That is what they call their science. It exists in a certain limit, but if you go beyond this limit, or come within it, you do not see it. The man who is playing does not see anything. So if you stand near him you do not see anything. Such is the hypnotism here. So we have first to get beyond the circle, Jnana, or stand within the circle of hypnotism, Bhakti, with God, the great player who is playing all these things, the whole universe He projects. Chapter after chapter comes and goes. This is called Maya, the power which creates all these tremendous things, and He who is the ruler of this Maya, is God.

Predestiny and Evil in Hindu Myth—II

JEANINE MILLER

In the last issue of *Samvit* Jeanine Miller told the story of Vena, a prince whose incorrigibly evil behaviour drove his father to abandon his kingdom. This story led to a discussion of good and evil. Here the author discusses whether suffering is brought about by evil behaviour or is predestined.

THE NECESSITY to change one's attitude—and indeed the choice is given to us to change or not to change—if one is to surmount obstacles, whether these be considered as 'karmic' or 'punishment', is brought out clearly in the New Testament. It is there in Christ's question in reply to his disciples who had asked whether certain Galileans were such great sinners that they were murdered. We have here, incidentally, also the equation of violent death with sin or evil. Christ answers:

'Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you: nay, but except ye turn your mind completely, ye shall all likewise perish.' (Luke. xiii. 4, 5)

The implication is very clear: our wrong outlook, and therefore our wrong way of living, brings on violence; unless we change our attitude to life we shall likewise bring evil upon ourselves—whether it be punishment in the shape of violent death or whatever.

In the Vena episode the emphasis is on 'evil conduct' as a direct effect of evil preconditioning. This is *predestiny*. To the question, why did Vena inherit only the negative side of his parents, the Hindu tradition would answer that this is because he must have behaved in the past in such a way as to bring this evil karma upon himself. As we sow, so we reap. As S. Radhakrishnan explains in connection with the law of action and reaction, or karma: 'The law of *karma* is not external

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to the individual. The judge is not without but within. The law by which virtue brings its triumph and ill-doing its retribution is the unfolding of the law of our being.¹

Wendy O' Flaherty comments: 'The myth is about what happened to Vena (his evil), not about what he did (his sin); for in India the significant evil is what happens to one, not what one does. The myth seeks to explain inexplicable causes by describing visible effects.'²

Surely the two — what *happens* as a result of what one *does*—are inextricably linked. Vena's wrong attitude which brings about his sudden death, may be taken for granted in some of the Puranas; this does not alter the fact that although the story may be about the outcome of his sin, without such sin there would be no such outcome. The inexplicable causes, furthermore, are bound up with one's previous actions, hence with karma. Man makes or mars his own life according to his deeds, for he is aware of what he does and therefore bears full responsibility. Wendy O'Flaherty further states:

'Vena's mistake was in not acting to change his fate. The Vena myth presents an extremely detailed description of the effect of his sin, but (with one notable exception) a very vague idea of the cause, for the myth functions on two levels, one of which assumes the cause (cosmic predetermination), and the other tentatively introduces a totally different cause (Vena's own inability to oppose fate).'³

She does admit that 'in spite of karma, the individual can choose to accept his fate or to challenge it'.¹ In Vena's case his own conditioning prevented him from seeing clearly and thereby changing his attitude, and this is the crucial point.

Symbolic Meaning of Vena's Expisode

But the death of Vena is not the end of the problem of evil. From the wreck of his personality emerge two offshoots, the wicked and the good son, the *tamasic* and the *rajasic* tinged with *sattva*.

The story tells us that after the death of Vena the sages soon beheld a great cloud of dust arise and spread everywhere on the horizon. They discovered that this cloud was raised 'by troops of clustering robbers hastening to fall upon their prey' (*Vishnu Purana* I.13.30,31). From the social standpoint, a kingdom without a ruler soon falls prey to anarchy, hence chaos. From the psychological standpoint, the forcible eradication, or repressing of excessive egoistic inflation is no cure, for destroying the ego only serves to let loose all the dark, disruptive forces of the unconscious, which are generally held in check by the ego, whether that ego be megalomaniac or not. The cloud of dust or confusion and the thieves rushing around to rob people are the mythological symbolic way of indicating this chaotic state not only of a kingdom without a central ruler, but also of a personality that has lost its central mooring or anchorage, ego-centredness, and has hence fallen a prey to complete disorder, chaos, or madness.

The *munis* decide to churn the body of Vena to produce an offspring, i.e. to reinstate order by means of a ruler in the kingdom. This ruler must be an offshoot of the previous ruler, in spite of the evil of the latter. This alone should point to a symbolical meaning to the whole episode, new life born from the ashes of the old. They first rub Vena's thigh, the description, as given in the *Brahmanda Purana* running as follows:

'The sages churned Vena's left thigh and the black Nishada was born of Vena's impurity; then the angry sages churned Vena's right hand as if it were a fire-stick and Prithu was born from that hand, shining forth like fire.' (II 36.127).

The various versions of the Purana differ slightly, but in all, the black, hideous being, described in the *Vishnu Purana* as 'of the complexion of a charred stake, with flattened features', is born from the left lower limb, i.e. the thigh, and the bright auspicious being is born from the right, upper limb, the arm or hand: In the *Bhagavata Purana*, both right and left arms are churned, whence a male and a female appear. The sages recognize them as being a part manifestation of Vishnu and of Lakshmi, respectively, both being inseparable (IV.15.3).

Some have seen in this churning a symbol of exorcism. This would imply a complete purification of the previous state

as a preliminary to the next step, viz. the birth of a suitable heir. The churning is similar to the twirling of the wooden stick in the matrix of wood, the method used by the *rishis* to produce fire. So in this respect Vena becomes symbolic of both the female and the male in producing offspring, and Prithu is born: he arises, 'resplendent in person, as if the blazing deity of Fire had been manifested' (*Vishnu Purana* I.13.39).

In all the descriptions of the birth of Prithu one observes a marked difference in the function of the left and right limb. The auspicious and inauspicious meaning attributed to the right hand and the left hand respectively is prevalent among all the ancient people all over the world, from the tribes of Africa to the Hindus, Celts and American Indians. An accumulation of evidence that shows a common basic attitude amidst all peoples was brought forward by Robert Hertz in his essays collected under the heading 'Death and the Right Hand'. Considering the meaning of the words right and left he writes:

'The former is used to express the ideas of physical strength and "dexterity", of intellectual "rectitude" and good judgement, of "uprightness" and moral integrity . . . While the word left evokes most of the ideas contrary to these. . . . The left is the hand of perjury, treachery and fraud . . . The power of the left hand is always somewhat occult and illegitimate; it inspires terror and repulsion. Its movements are suspect. . . . The exclusive preponderance of the right, and a repugnance for requiring anything of the left are the marks of a soul unusually associated with the divine and immune to what is profane or impure.'

In the churning of Vena's body, the evil associated with the left hand is transferred to the left thigh out of which is born Nishada who, in spite of being repugnant, is not killed, but is recognized as unsuitable and is told to sit down, *nishada*, hence his name. He is to become the ancestor of barbarous races and the inhabitants of the Vindhya mountains who are said to be sinful by nature and are described in the *Vishnu Purana* as 'characterized by the exterior tokens of depravity'. The seed of evil extracted from Vena becomes the seed of an evil generation.

The two offsprings are clear symbols of the separation of

good and evil yet born of the same source. The situation is no longer ambivalent but clear cut. Psychologically, Nishada would symbolize the sick aspect of the personality, possibly a neurosis that, like an abscess, in detaching itself from the whole, contributes to the healing process of the person who is then able to produce a good aspect. On the other hand, the fact that good does come out of Vena in the form of Prithu, even if from his right or auspicious arm, might signify that Vena was not completely bad, that the good side of his ancestry was still there although that had been inoperative; or it might signify that Prithu is born out of evil Vena as an act of grace on the part of Vishnu for the sake of mankind; this might indicate that the grace of God is operative, however evil the human being may be. But the Puranas are not concerned about these subtle points.

From the standpoint of the myth, evil is extracted from Vena in Nishada and only then can the good Prithu be born. In this respect the *Vishnu* and the *Padma Puranas* make further strange statements:

'By this means the wickedness of Vena was expelled; those Nishadas being born of his sins and carrying them away.' (*Vishnu Purana* I.13.37).

'When the Nishadas and other evil barbarians were born from Vena's body, the sages knew that the king's sins were gone. When Prithu was born from Vena's body, the king became spotless and righteous again and his sin was obliterated, the sin derived from his grandfather Death.' (*Padma Purana* 27.19ff).

We are faced here with the problem of the removal of sin, of the transfer of merit, or demerit, first through the churning of Vena's limbs, then through the action of the son. One son represents all the impurities which he inherits from his father and is therefore conditioned thereby in a way similar to Vena's conditioning from his very birth, hence predestined to evil both in himself and his progeny—or is the evil son only a symbol of evil seed necessary to account for certain tribes outside the pale of Brahmanism? However, in spite of willynilly taking upon himself all the sins of the father, this black dwarf cannot release the father thereby. Only the good son can

effect this release by performing the prescribed rites.

Later Puranas, such as the *Skanda* and the *Garuda*⁵ give out the story of the release of Vena from his sins. The simple conclusion of the *Vishnu Purana* is now no longer viable, but Vena has personally to pay for his sins. Accordingly, Prithu is told by the sage Narada that Vena has been reborn among the barbarians and is afflicted with consumption and leprosy. So the evil king not only gives birth to a progeny of barbarians from his left side but is himself reborn as one of these, and in addition, afflicted with the worst of diseases. This is evil karma indeed. Prithu, activated by filial piety, seeks out his father, brings him to a shrine of Shiva but is warned by Vayu against desecrating the holy place and is told by the birds of another holy spot—*Goshpada* where the footprint of Nandini, the daughter of the magic cow, can be seen and where his father's guilt can be washed away without desecrating the holy spot.⁶

Negation of Sin and Release

The release of a soul and the negation of sin through purifying rites is a very strange way of getting rid of evil karmic debts, but it is in accordance with the Brahmanic insistence on the performance of rites by the son at the death of his father in order to release the father into heaven. Furthermore the idea of transference of merit and demerit is still prevalent nowadays. The *Vamana Purana*, however, not satisfied with the mere performance of purifying rites, makes Shiva himself intervene and tell Vena that after dwelling in his presence for a while he would be reborn as the demon Andhaka and that only after further purifications and in another birth would he become Bhringi, leader of Shiva's hosts.⁷

Psychologically, we might consider that what is evil in a person will automatically come out in one way or another—in the Vena legend, this is symbolized by the birth of the evil son. Nevertheless, the whole nature having been contaminated because of the evil, it has to be purified here. The good son has to perform the purifying rites and, even then, before the person may become whole once again, he has still to live, to suffer, and to expiate.

Philosophically, we find here two highly important implications; the doctrine of the sins of the fathers being visited upon the children, so clearly stated in the *Bible*, is, in the Vena story, implicit, and its corollary, the solidarity of all life: we are all bound to one another whether we admit it or not, and the behaviour of each one affects, in ways known or unknown, that of everyone else. The son, however opposite to his father he may be in point of good or evil, yet suffers for his father's misconduct; even if it is only through anxiety on the part of the good son as to the father's whereabouts and future. In his effort to release his father to heaven he gives full expression to his inherent goodness and acts in accordance with the solidarity of life; the sin of one is the sin of all; the welfare of one the welfare of all. The latter aspect is especially evident in the episode of the famished creatures coming to Prithu on his coronation to demand their fair share of nourishment which, as a result of Vena's misrule Earth had withdrawn from them, and which will be considered in due course.

One great problem brought to our notice by the first part of this legend, is the problem of suffering as consequent upon evil doing. Why should suffering be the only means of expiation? This is one of the great questions to which no fundamentally satisfying answer seems ever to have been given. So Dr. Panikkar asks:

'What is the meaning of suffering? Why do we suffer? The myth of the fall seeks only to explicate this cosmic scandal and at the same time safeguard the prestige of God. In the Indian tradition, the law of karma asserts the normality of suffering, since here pain is always "consequence" and never "original". Buddhism likewise begins with the central fact of sorrow; . . . The essential question is not to know who has the right to inflict pain, but to understand why punishment exists at all. The first response, already a demythicized answer, speaks of the medicinal character of pain, but clearly this is not satisfying. Experience alone shows, and psychology confirms, that pain has today largely lost its purifying value. Even if punishment still retained its medicinal character the question would not be resolved, one could yet ask why it is necessary to make someone suffer in order to purify him. . . . The moment you ask why you must "suffer" . . . you no longer accept pain on its own;]

the purifying efficacy of pain shrinks in direct proportion to its demythicization. In short, pain without the myth loses its *raison d'être* and becomes intolerable. The myth ceases to be effective as soon as you question pain as a purifying process . . .⁸

In the Indian context, existence, in its innermost essence, is a 'unity'. As well expressed by John Bowkar:

'All that is, is an aspect or manifestation of Being itself, Brahman. To break down that unity is to introduce tension and conflict and strife.'⁹

The world of duality which is our everyday world is inevitably one of tension, of swaying from one opposite to another, from joy to grief, from fear to self-assurance, from cruelty to mercy, from stupidity to intelligence, and so on. To the mind completely identified with the world of duality which it equates with Reality there can be no solution to the problem of evil. But this very identification holds the key to the solution. At the core of all *being* is *bliss*; this is the testimony of the Upanishads and of all the mystics of every religious tradition who have experienced the core of being as *oneness*, as that centre point to which converge and from which emerge all streams of life, where is the coincidence of opposites, whence the state of wholeness. This oneness led to the famous Upanishadic equation: *That thou art*. But the *Atharva Veda rishis* had already experienced this state and had expressed it thus: 'The Brahman that, of old, first manifested from the luminous borderline, the seer has uncovered; its loftiest station, fathomless, he has uncovered as the womb of the manifest and the unmanifest.' (IV.i.I) To identify ourselves with the world of transient realities as our reckless minds are constantly doing, with the world of evanescent shadows and opposites, of mine and thine, and of separateness is inevitably to turn our back to the world of Reality, hence of oneness, to subject ourselves to the tyranny of one or another of the poles and thereby bringing about suffering at the loss, collapse, or the failure of one or another of these to satisfy us; for nothing that is divided, fragmented or apart can ultimately be fully satisfying. To be 'attached' to anything that is doomed to come to an end is automatically to court sorrow. Hence humanity suffers far

more than the animal world. But suffering is not only a result of attachment to transient objects as though they were permanent, but also of wrong activities in the past whose consequences are wrong tendencies and bad heredity in the present, and of the perpetuation of wrong attitudes in the present which preclude the inception of a new orientation and therefore an opening to an altogether new life. All this is quite clear in the Vena case. But to view suffering as mere 'punishment' is the human, albeit natural, distortion of the inexorable law: as we sow, so we reap; if we sow wrongly we reap a mess. As neatly and somewhat ironically put by A. Wayman in connection with karma: 'Our own wrong actions become the "policeman" (in psychological terms, the "super-ego" or punitive self) that drag us away to retribution.'¹⁰

Unjustifiable suffering such as that resulting from man-imposed sanctions e.g. the over-rigidity of the caste system, is due to misapplication, distortion, and abuse of the natural categories inherent in human society and is therefore not a 'punishment' but an inevitable consequence of a long-standing abuse. Some are born with intellectual gifts, some with artistic talents, others with a bent for craftsmanship, others with muscle power; that they should bend themselves together for solidarity and protection, (as our trade unions) is but natural. As Vivekananda put it: 'Caste is a natural order. I can perform one duty in social life, and you another; you can govern a country, and I can mend a pair of shoes, but there is no reason why you are greater than I, for can you mend my shoes? Can I govern the country? . . .'¹¹

Suffering, like everything else in the Divine Economy, has its useful part to play; for more often than not man is brought back to his senses, i.e. to performing 'appropriate action' through being buffeted by the 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune', hence through suffering; this is where the idea of the redemptive quality of suffering comes in, but only those who can see beyond it as well as its inner meaning can fully accept it. The ultimate truth which, in the Indian tradition, is the bliss of pure being (*sat cit, ananda*) will never be found this side of the 'opposition',¹² but through living a life of 'appropriate action' (dharma) which for the Hindu is the foundation of all truths.

Can we take it that Vena symbolizes mankind in its corrupt state, mankind fallen into matter, the tempting serpent that leads but to disaster, hence mankind, offspring of death, or taking after death, symbol of corruption, but still capable of producing a better race or offspring; the latter being personified in Prithu who, in spite of his corrupt and fallen human origin is born through 'divine grace', as the 'regenerator' with all the potentialities of godliness, ready to be actualized and to 'redeem' his fallen 'parent' or immediate corrupt origin?*

References

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2. W. O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* (Berkeley 1976). Chapter on 'The Birth of Death'.
3. *Ibid.*, 363.
4. *Ibid.*, 364.
5. *Skanda* VII.1.336, 95.253; *Garuda* VI.4-8.
6. For a full investigation of this problem see W. O'Flaherty, *op cit.*, 321ff.
7. C.f. *Aitareya Brahmana* VI.i.1, where the gods try to destroy the consequences of guilt through a sacrificial session but need the help of a serpent-sage.
8. Raimundo Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics; Towards a Cross-cultural Religious Understanding* (New Jersey 1979).
9. John Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World* (Cambridge 1970).
10. *Indo-Iranian Journal* III, 1959, 54.
11. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Almora 1923-32), III 245.
12. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* IV.iii.21: 'He is not affected by good, he is not affected by evil, for then he has passed "Beyond all sorrows of the heart"'. And IV.iv.19: 'In Brahman there is no diversity. He who sees diversity goes from death to death'.

*The third part of this thoughtful article will be published in the next issue.

Brahma-Sutra-Bhashya of Shankaracharya

M.R. YARDI

— 11 —

God and the Individual Self

IN THIS article the most important part of Vedantic teaching, namely the relation of the individual Self with Brahman, is discussed. Different views have been held on this subject by the commentators, giving rise to schools of Vedanta known as the Advaita, the Vishishtadvaita and the Dvaita, associated with the names of Sri Shankara, Sri Ramanuja and Sri Madhva respectively. These were followed by the Bheda-Abheda of Nimbarka and the Shuddha-Advaita of Vallabha. Although these views differ from one another very significantly, their exponents claim that the differences are based on their interpretations of the Upanishads, the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the *Brahma-Sutra*, which are regarded as the most authoritative texts of Vedanta. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the passages bearing on this subject as contained in the Upanishads and then to determine the view held by the *sutrakara* on the basis of a strict examination of his *sutras*.

There are many Vedic texts which declare that the individual Self is non-different from the highest Self. 'In the beginning, my dear, this Being alone was without a second' (*Chhandogya Upanishad* VI. ii. 1); 'the Self is indeed all this' (*Chhandogya Upanishad* VI. xxv. 2); 'All this is that Self' (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* II. iv. 6); 'There is no other seer but He' (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* III. viii. 11). This is also confirmed by the Smriti, 'Vasudeva is all' (*Bhagavad-Gita* VII. 19); 'He who sees the highest Lord abiding alike within all creatures' (*Bhagavad-Gita* XIII. 27). This is also supported by the passages which deny all difference; 'Whoever thinks that he is one and Brahman another, he knows not' (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* I. iv. 10); 'he goes from death to death who sees in It diversity'

(*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* IV.iv. 19) and again by the passages which negate all change on the part of the Self, 'This is that great unborn Self who is undecaying, undying, immortal, fearless Brahman' (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* IV.4. 25). Nor does the passage, 'He who knows Brahman; which is real, knowledge and infinite, as hidden in the cave,' (*Taittiriya Upanishad* II. 1) refer to the cavity of the heart as different from the abode of the individual Self. And that none else than Brahman is hidden in the cavity we know a subsequent passage in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* (II. 6). according to which God Himself entered into the created being (*Shatapatha Brahmana* I.iv. 22). Further passages such as 'Thou art That' (*Chhandogya Upanishad* VI.viii. 7), 'I am Brahman' (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* I.iv. 10), 'Where one sees nothing else' (*Chhandogya Upanishad* VII xxiv.1), 'But there is nothing second, nothing else separate from him that he could see' (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* IV iii. 23) show that the Highest Self is non-different from the individual Self (*Shatapatha Brahmana* IV.iv. 4).

We also meet here and there with statements about the difference between the individual Self and the highest self in the earlier Vedic texts. The *Shatapatha Brahmana* X.vi. 32 reads as follows: 'Like a grain of paddy or barley or millet, or a millet seed, the golden *Purusha* is inside the Self (*Antaratman*). In the *Chhandogya Upanishad* VI.iii. 2 it is stated, 'That Divinity thought, "Well, let me enter into these three deities by means of this living Self and let me then develop names and forms."' In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* III. 7, a section known as the *Antaryamin Brahman*, we are told that within all elements, sense organs and also within all individual Selves there abides an inner controller (*Antaryamin*). In later Upanishads such as the *Katha*, the *Mundaka* and the *Shvetashvatara*, however, the difference between God and the individual Self becomes more pronounced. God is all-knowing and all-wise (*Mundaka Upanishad* I.i. 9) and his power is said to be various with His inherent wisdom, strength and (creative) activity (*Shvetashvatara Upanishad* VI. 8). On the other hand, the individual Self is said to be ignorant and powerless (*Shvetashvatara Upanishad* I. 9). God is described as the Lord of the universe and of the individual Selves (*Shvetashvatara Upanishad* I. 10). It is only through fear of Him that the fire burns, the sun gives heat, and Indra, the lord of the gods and Wind and Death speed on their

way (*Katha Upanishad* II.iii. 3). When the Self sees the other, the Lord who is worshipped and His greatness, he becomes free from sorrow (*Mundaka Upanishad* III.i. 2).

Even before the *sutrakara* had composed the *Brahma-Sutra*, different opinions were held about the relation between God and the individual Self. In the fourth section of the first chapter of the *Brahma-Sutra*, the question is discussed as to why in a certain passage of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* Brahman is referred to in terms which are strictly applicable to the individual Self. In the same Upanishad we come across the solemn declaration that 'all this is the Self' (IV.v. 6,7). In three *sutras* I.iv. 20-22, the *sutrakara* gives the views of three ancient teachers about the relation in which the individual Self stands to the highest Self. *Sutra* 20 states, 'Ashmarathya thinks that non-difference between the two is indicative of the fulfilment of the above declaration (प्रतिज्ञासिद्धेलिगमाश्मरथ्य). In the next *sutra*, we are told that the declaration (of identity) applies only to the state of the (released) Self, when he departs उत्क्रमिष्यत एवम्भावादित्यौडुलोमिः). Further, in *sutra* 22, we are told, (the declaration about identity holds good), because the (highest Self) exists (in the condition of the individual Self, so says Kashakritsna' (अवस्थितेरिति काशकृत्स्नः).

Ashmarathya seems to adopt the Bheda-Abheda-relation, that is, it is not a relation of absolute difference nor of absolute non-difference. The Self is neither different nor non-different from Brahman, even as sparks are neither different nor non-different from fire. The world of name and form, inclusive of individual Selves, is real and springs from God, and being connected by the relation of cause and effect, is non-different from Him. As Vachaspati explains, if the individual Selves are held to be absolutely different from Brahman, it would mean that they are not of the nature of consciousness. On the other hand, if they are thought to be absolutely non-different from Brahman, there is no need to give them any instruction to attain the state of Brahman. This theory has received further elaboration at the hands of later commentators such as Bhartriprapancha, Bhaskara, Nimbarka and Vallabha.

Audulomi holds that the individual Self is altogether different from Brahman up to the time of his release, when he becomes merged in Brahman. This view seems to be based on the *Chhandogya Upanishad* VIII.xii.3 and the *Mundaka*

Upanishad III.ii.8. In the former it is stated, 'Even so, when the serene one rises up from this body and reaches the highest light, he attains his own form'. The latter states, 'Just as the flowing rivers disappear into the ocean, casting off name and form, even so the knower, freed from name and form, attains to the divine *Purusha*, higher than the high'. This view seems to have been held by the Pancharatrikas also. Vachaspati quotes a verse from the *Pancharatra Agama*: 'Up to the moment emancipation is reached, the individual Self and the highest Self are different. But the released Self is no longer different from the highest Self, since there is no further cause of difference.' The difference and non-difference between the two thus depends on difference of condition, difference in bondage and non-difference in release. This doctrine is known as *Satyabhedavada*.

Kashakritsna holds that the Self is absolutely non-different from Brahman, but appears to be different from Brahman because of his limiting adjuncts such as the body. Sri Shankara takes *avasthiti* to mean 'abiding of the Supreme in the form of the Self' and takes this *sutra* as a confirmation of his Advaita doctrine. When the Self in its state of ignorance becomes associated with the unreal elements and sense organs, a person thinks that he is different from Brahman, but this distinction is not real and disappears with true knowledge. Sri Ramanuja takes *avasthiti* to mean the abiding of one thing in another rather than identity. To him, Brahman is a personal God, whom he calls Narayana or Vishnu. This Brahman comprises within Himself the elements of plurality, matter with its various modifications and Selves of different classes. These are real constituents of Brahman and constitute the body of the Lord. Sri Ramanuja takes Kashakritsna's view as meaning that Brahman abides within the individual Self and quotes scriptures in support of his view, viz. *Chhandogya Upanishad* VI.iii.2 and *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* III.7. The latter says that within all elements, sense organs and lastly within all individual Selves there abides an inner ruler known as the Antaryamin Brahman. Sri Ramanuja's doctrine is known as *Vishishtadvaita* or non-dualism with a distinction.

The *sutrakara* states in *sutra* II.iii.49 a possible objection to the doctrine of unity and replies to it. It may be objected that if the doctrine of unity is true, it would result in the mixing

up of the results of actions performed by someone else. The *sutrakara* replies that 'There is no such confusion on account of the non-extension (of the Self beyond the body)' (असंततेश्चाव्यतिकरः). He further says in the next *sutra*, 'And the Self is only an appearance of the Lord' (आभास एव च). The Self is a mere appearance of Brahman like the reflection of the sun in water. Even as when one reflected image of the sun trembles, other reflected images do not tremble, so when one Self experiences the result of his actions, another Self is not likely to be affected by it. This *sutra* is taken by the Advaita Vedantins as a statement of the *pratibimbavada*, the reflection theory. This theory holds that the individual Self is but the reflection of the highest Self in a person's *buddhi* and so is to be distinguished from the limitation theory, *avachhedavada*, according to which the Self is limited by the conditioning factor. It is doubtful if this interpretation is correct, as this is the only reference to the reflection theory and it seems to be out of character with the thinking of the *sutrakara*. Sri Ramanuja states that as the Selves are distinct, of atomic size and reside in different bodies; there is no mixing up of the results of their actions. He also takes *abhasa* to mean a fallacious argument and criticizes the view of Sri Shankara that the Self is Brahman limited by non-real adjuncts as erroneous.

The Self and Action

The *sutrakara*, however, does not seem to accept the view of Kashakritsna in its entirety. The *sutra* I.iv.22 does not present his doctrinal statement (*siddhanta*), as it does not contain the particle *tu*, with which he usually introduces his view. On the other hand, there is sufficient evidence to show that the *sutrakara* did not subscribe to the absolute identity of the Self with Brahman. In *sutra* I.ii.4 he states, '(they are different) because action and agent are (separately) mentioned.' (कर्मकर्तृ व्यपदेशाच्च). This refers to a passage in the *Chhandogya Upanishad* III.xiv.4, 'Into Him I shall enter on departing hence'. 'Here the object of meditation, Brahman, is declared to be different from the meditator, the Self. One and the same thing cannot be both the subject and the object. Therefore Brahman which is attained is something different from the Self. In the next *sutra* he further adds 'and because

of the difference of words (i.e. their case endings)' (शब्दविशेषात्). The Vedic text referred to here occurs in the *Shatapatha Brahmana* X.vi.32, which says that the golden *Purusha* is within the Self. Here Brahman indicated by the word *Purusha* is in the nominative and so distinct from the Self indicated by the locative. It is further stated in *sutra* I.ii.6, '(And also because) of a Smriti passage' (स्मृतेश्च). This is the passage in the *Gita* (XVIII.61) in which Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that the Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, causing them, through His Maya, to revolve as if mounted on a machine. Sri Shankara explains that the difference is due to limiting adjuncts, and they are unreal.

The *sutrakara* repeats the argument in *sutras* I.ii.8 and 20. In the former, he says, 'If it be said that (their identity) would lead to the experience of pleasure and pain (by the highest Self) it is not so, for there is a difference' (सम्भोगप्राप्तिरिति चेन्न वैशेष्यात्). The embodied Self acquires merit and demerit by his actions and experiences pleasure and pain. Not so the highest Self, who is of a different nature and is free from all evil. Sri Shankara gives the somewhat forced explanation that the difference is between knowledge and ignorance. The experience of pleasure and pain arises from *avidya*, i.e. ignorance, while unity is seen through knowledge of the Self. The latter *sutra* states, 'Nor is it the Self (the indwelling spirit), for in both (recensions) also it is taught as different' (शारीरश्चोभयेऽपि हि भेदेनैवमधीयते). The word 'not' is supplied from the previous *sutra*. Both the Kanva and Madhyandina recensions of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* III.vii.22 speak of Brahman and the Self as different from each other, standing in the relation of the ruler and the ruled. Both Sri Ramanuja and Sri Madhva think that this passage supports their respective doctrines of qualified monism and dualism.

It was also seen earlier that the Self and the Lord stand in the relation of that which is acted upon and that which acts. Here the question arises whether the relation between the two is one of master and servant or whole and part. To this the *sutrakara* replies in II.iii.43 that 'the individual Selves are the parts of the highest Self, because of the specific mention of difference as also otherwise, for in some Vedic texts it is said to be (of the nature of) slaves, fishermen and so on.' (अंशो नानाव्यपदेशादन्यथा चापि दाशकितवादित्वमधीयत एके). There are

passages in the Upanishads which speak of both difference and non-difference of the Lord from the Self. There is also a passage in the *Atharva Veda* which affirms that 'such low beings as fishermen, slaves and gamblers are described as Brahman ... are in fact Brahman.' These statements can be harmonized only if the Self is regarded as a part of the Lord. Sri Shankara adds that it is *amsha iva*, it is a part, as it were, since the Self can be only an imagined part, because the highest Self is partless. Sri Ramanuja states that the Selves are in reality parts of Brahman and not merely in appearance as held by Sri Shankara. The next two *sutras* state that 'this follows from the word of the *mantra* also' (मन्त्रवर्णञ्चि) and moreover, it is so stated in the *Smriti*', (अपि च स्मर्यते). A *mantra* in the *Chhandogya Upanishad* (III.xii.6) says that the *Purusha* is greater than creation and 'one of His feet covers all beings', i.e. moving and non-moving things. In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, too, (V.7), the Lord states that 'A part of Me becomes the living, eternal Self in the world of life'.

As to this, an objection may be raised that if the Self is a part of Brahman, the latter may also suffer the pain of the *samsaric* state like the Self. For we see in ordinary life that Devadatta suffers pain when only his hand or foot or some other limb is afflicted. In reply, *sutra* II.iii. 46 states, 'The highest Self is not (affected by pleasure and pain) thus (like the Self) as in the case of light' (प्रकाशादिवन्नैवं परः). Just as the all-pervading light of the sun or the moon looks straight or bent when it comes into contact with a straight or crooked thing or as the ether enclosed in a jar seems to move when the jar is moved or as the sun appears to shake when the water in which it is reflected shakes, but neither the light nor the ether nor the sun is in reality affected thereby, so the Lord is not affected by the imperfections or pain suffered by the Self through ignorance. The *sutrakara* adds in the next *sutra*, 'The *Smritis* also state thus' (स्मरन्ति च). For example, Vyasa states in the *Mahabharata* (XII.cccxxxix. 14.15).

'Between the two, the highest Self is said to be eternal and devoid of qualities, and it is not stained by the fruits of actions any more than a lotus leaf by water. But the other One whose essence is action is subject to bondage and liberation and it is He who becomes again and again associated with the seventeen

factors' (i.e. the ten sense organs, the five *pranas*, the mind and the body).

The Self Is Not the Creator

The *sutrakara* discusses in *sutra* I.iii. 43 and II.1.22 in what manner the highest Self is different from the individual Self. The former *sutra* states, '(The nature of the highest Self is established) by such words as "ruler" (पत्यादिशब्देभ्यः)'. It is stated in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* IV.iv. 22, 'It is the controller of all, the Lord of all, the ruler of all'. In his commentary on *sutra* II.iii. 45 Sri Shankara remarks that although in life the relation between the ruler and the ruled holds good only in the case of master and servant, it is ascertained from the scriptures that the relation of part and whole and that of ruler and ruled may well go together. The *sutra* II.i. 22 reads, 'Brahman is something more (than the individual Self), because of the specific mention of difference' (अधिकं तु भेदनिर्देशात्). Sri Shankara explains it as follows: The omniscient, omnipotent Brahman, which is by nature eternal, pure, intelligent, and ever free, is something more than, i.e. different from, the individual Self. We say that It is the Creator of the universe. The fault of doing what is not beneficial and the like do not attach to Brahman, for It is eternally free. Nor is there any obstruction to Its knowledge and power, as It is omniscient and omnipotent. The individual Self is of a different nature, and we cannot declare it to be the Creator of the universe.

The *sutrakara* finally discusses the nature of a liberated Self in *sutras* IV.iv.4-7. In *sutra* 4 he says, 'In liberation the Self exists as inseparable (from Brahman), because this is seen (from the scripture)' (अविभागेन दृष्टत्वात्). The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* IV.iii.23 states that there is no such second thing separate from it, which it can see. The *Katha Upanishad* II.i.15 and other texts which set forth the nature of the liberated Self, as also the illustrations like the river and the sea (*Mundaka Upanishad* III.ii.8) reveal only this fact of non-difference. The next *sutra* gives the view of Jaimini as saying, '(The released Self becomes endowed) with the attributes of Brahman, on account of scriptural references and so on, so thinks Jaimini' (ब्राह्मेण जैमिनिरुपन्यासादिभ्यः). Jaimini thinks that the released Self becomes established in the form of Brahman and so

possess all the attributes mentioned in the *Chhandogya Upanishad* VIII.vii.1 beginning with freedom from sin and ending with true desire as also omnipresence and rulership over all. In *sutra* 6 we are told that 'Audulomi thinks that it is solely as consciousness, (that the individual Self manifests itself) that being its true nature', (चित्ति तन्मात्रेण तदात्मकत्वादित्यौदुलोमिः). Since the Self is of the nature of consciousness, It exists as such in the released condition. Freedom from sin and such as stated by Jaimini cannot constitute the nature of the Self. The *sutrakara* states his own view in *sutra* 7, 'Even so, on account of the continuance of the former qualities (admitted) because of scriptural reference and so on, there is no contradiction, so says Badarayana' (एवमप्युपन्यासात् पूर्वभावादविरोधं बादरायणः). The *sutrakara* combines the two views and says that the released Self is of the nature of consciousness and possesses all the lordly powers of the highest Self, with one exception, which he mentions in *sutra* IV.iv.17. He says, 'The released Self possesses all lordly powers except the power of running this universe because of (the Lord being solely) the subject matter of Its topic and (the Self) not being near It' (जगदव्यापारवर्जं प्रकरणादसन्निहितत्वाच्च). The *sutra* says that the individual Self has all divine powers except those of creation, preservation and destruction of the world. He also does not have the power of world-control, which is the sole prerogative of God. If the released Selves have also the power of control, they may work at cross purposes affecting the stability of the world. Thus the individual Self, free from Its limiting adjuncts is non-different from the highest Self in Its essential nature, viz. consciousness. According to the *sutrakara*, therefore, the difference between the two is as between a part and the whole, so that the individual Self shares the essential nature and divine powers of Brahman, with the exception of the latter's omniscience and omnipotence, with which It creates and controls the universe.

Vedanta in Australia

ROBERT GRANT

— The Past —

VEDANTA is known to have come to Australia at least in 1897, during the lifetime of Swami Vivekananda. He had sent his brother-disciple Swami Shivananda to visit Ceylon to teach Vedanta there, in response to the earnest appeal from Hindu communities of that island-nation. There, an Australian lady, Mrs. Elsie Pickett, attended a number of the Swami's *Bhagavad Gita* and Raja Yoga classes. Later also known by the name of Hari Priya (dear to God) she was specially trained by the Swami to teach Vedanta to Westerners, and was sent with his authority to Australia and New Zealand to prepare the way for a teacher of Vedanta there.

Sister Avabhamia, a Swedish lady, educated in the United States, came to Australia in 1908 to spread Vedanta. She was instructed and guided by Swami Abhedananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Sister Avabhamia conducted classes and gave discourses on Vedanta in different parts of Australia and New Zealand. She was able to rouse considerable interest among the educated public.

In time a Vedanta magazine was also started. For three years Sister Avabhamia and her faithful circle of friends and followers did admirable work in promoting Vedanta in Australia. In 1911 she left on a tour of India and other Eastern countries after which the classes gradually ceased and the magazine also stopped publication.

James Wale was an Australian bricklayer who served with the army in Egypt and the Middle East during the First World War. In 1925 he was living a life of aimlessness and heavy drinking when he had a profound experience. He had a vision of an Indian face and inwardly heard one word 'Vivekananda'. This experience caused him to reflect on his lifestyle, and he immediately gave up smoking and drinking and began a search to identify the face he had seen.

Having failed to find anything in his local library, he

eventually found a copy of *Raja Yoga* by Swami Vivekananda in a Sydney bookshop. Inspired by the book, Wale wrote to the book's publishers, Advaita Ashram, Mayavati, in India for more information. The correspondence eventually led him to go to India in 1927, to receive initiation from Swami Shivananda, and to take the initial vows for admission as a probationer in the Ramakrishna Order, taking the name of Brahmachari Vivek Chaitanya. Under the combined pressure of the Indian climate and diet his health failed after about two years, and he was advised to return to Australia.

On his return he continued to live the life of a 'monk' helping the elderly and the sick and taking classes and giving talks on Vedanta. He was visited on occasions by monks of the Order in transit through Sydney, including Swamis Avinashananda and Rudrananda. James Wale continued with his work until he became ill with cancer and died about 1951.

Swami Ranganathananda, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and international emissary of Vedanta, first came to Australia in 1969, stopping off for a week during an eighteen-month lecture tour of the USA and twenty-four other countries. He returned for six weeks in 1971 visiting Perth, Adelaide, Canberra, and Sydney, meeting a broad strata of people and giving talks, lectures and private interviews. While in Perth a Ramakrishna Vedanta Society was formed by a multinational group. From that time onwards the Swami has visited this country almost annually giving public lectures, and conducting classes and spiritual retreats in various cities.

In the early 1970s, a devotee, Mrs. Vilma Spencer, the Swami's hostess in Sydney, began a Vedanta Book Agency to assist the spread of Vedanta by making available books on Vedanta and Ramakrishna/Vivekananda literature. The Book Agency succeeded in this, and was also instrumental in providing a point of contact between a large number of people with a common interest.

By 1974 a solid core of people existed who had been attracted to the rational, practical and universal philosophy of Vedanta, and at a meeting held on 9 June, 1974 the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of NSW was formed and registered under the NSW Charitable Collections Act.

In 1976 a Vedanta Bookshop was opened at 44 Harrington Street, in the historic 'Rocks' area of Sydney. The shop served

as a valuable focal point for the spread of Vedanta in Sydney, stocking a wide range of relevant books along with providing a venue for the devotee members to congregate occasionally. The Society organized visits to Australia by Swami Ranganathananda and Pravrajika Ajayaprana of Sri Sarada Math which gave considerable inspiration to the people here.

In response to the earnest and repeated requests of this Society, Sri Sarada Math at Dakshineswar, Calcutta (Headquarters of the women's wing of the Ramakrishna Order) consented in 1981 to send a nun (*sannyasini*) to take up residence in Sydney. This decision became effective on 15 April 1982, when Pravrajika Ajayaprana, a senior *sannyasini* and an assistant, arrived in Australia. Their arrival also marked the historic establishment of the first officially affiliated centre of Sri Sarada Math outside of India. The Society was subsequently renamed as the Ramakrishna Sarada Vedanta Society of NSW.

After spending several months in the homes of two devotees, the two nuns were able to move into a spacious home at 25 Anderson Road, Mortdale. This property was taken on lease for one year by the Society. At this time the Vedanta Bookshop was closed and the contents moved into the house at Mortdale. It was here that Pravrajika Ajayaprana in her capacity as the President and spiritual director of the Society, began conducting weekly *Bhagavad-Gita* classes and Sunday talks on Vedanta and spiritual life in general.

Gradually, a small group of earnest spiritual aspirants came to bask in the sunshine of the knowledge and peace that permeated the holy atmosphere of Australia's first Sarada Tapovan (convent). That year passed all too quickly, and unfortunately, the Society was required to look for another property to house the nuns and the expanding institution.

In July 1983 a spacious house with beautiful gardens was obtained in the centrally located Strathfield area. However, after only a year the house had to be returned to the owner. Consequently, the Society took on lease two properties. The first of these, 12 Action Street, Croydon, was the residence for the two nuns. The other, 49-51 Burwood, served as the venue for conducting lectures, classes and the Vedanta Book Agency.

As a result of a successful fund-raising campaign the

Society was able, one year later, to purchase property for the Sarada Convent at 5 Quandong Avenue, Burwood.

In May 1987, the NSW Government kindly granted to the Society, tax deductibility on donations towards the purchase of a hall to be used as a Vedanta Education Building. Fund-raising began in earnest and on Wednesday, 16 September 1987, the Society took possession of a hall at 15 Liverpool Road, Croydon. The foundations for Ramakrishna Vedanta in Australia were now firmly in place.

The Present and The Future

The Vedanta work is gradually expanding in this country. Along with the weekly classes and Sunday talks, and a monthly *Vivekachudamani* class in Newcastle, Pravrajika Ajayaprana Mataji conducts retreats and lectures on invitation, in other capital cities of Australia. There is now an increasing awareness and appreciation of the Vedanta Philosophy and with the imminent arrival of another nun from India, the Society will be in a better position to cater to the increasing invitations and requests from various organizations and individuals in different parts of Australia for spiritual guidance, classes and lectures.